Christ in a Moslem Novel

—James Kritzeck

THE

Commonweal

Southern Italy

POLITICS OF HUNGER

by George Lorimer

A Positive Program

THE LOW-INCOME FARMER

by Martin E. Schirber

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THE COMMONWEAL
386 FOURTH AVENUE
NEW YORK 16

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Entered as second-class matter at the post office at Orange, Conn., under the act of March 3, 1879. Published weekly, printed and copyrighted 1956 in the U. S. A. by the Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc., 386 Fourth Ave., New York 16, N. Y., MUrray Hill 3-9685

U. S. and Canada, $8 a year. Foreign, $10. Single copies 20¢

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-THIRD YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

WAR AND PEACE

ONCE AGAIN the Soviet has presented to the West a comprehensive disarmament plan, and once again in Western capitals the diplomats and disarmament experts are acting as though the postman had just left a parcel which ticked suspiciously.

This caution on the part of the West is well-founded, and it is easy to understand why the initial reaction of the West to the Russian proposal was one of skepticism. One reason why the Kremlin would put forth another disarmament plan at this time is undoubtedly to divert the world's attention from the unrest in the satellites and the ruthless extinction of life and liberty in Hungary.

Western diplomats were quick to point out also that the text of the Russian proposal contained a warning about the Soviet Union's power to overrun the whole of Western Europe. This threat, coupled with the earlier one of armed intervention in the Middle East, was apparently intended to show the Arab world the muscle of its self-styled champion as well as to aim yet another blow at an already battered NATO.

This latest Russian technique of inserting a threat of war into the text of a disarmament proposal carries with it the further advantage of enabling Russia to tell her restive satellites that Russian troops on their soil must be strengthened because of the constant military threat from the West; at the same time Russia can appear to the uncommitted nations as the true champion of peace, patiently offering the West yet another "peace plan" which the imperialistic West will, alas, probably reject.

In view of the many targets, then, which Russia hopes to hit with this single arrow it is obvious, as Western officials are pointing out, that the latest Russian proposal is basically an instrument for propaganda rather than a serious solution for the current impasse on disarmament.

It is hoped, however, that the West, taking its cue from Washington, will not therefore dismiss the Russian proposal out of hand simply because it is basically a vehicle for propaganda. The West has reacted this way in the past, and has, by that very action, insured the success of the repeated maneuver to gain genuine propaganda advantages from synthetic disarmament proposals. To all but ourselves, the Western readiness to give a resounding "No" to every Russian proposal may well seem like an automatic response built up by years of conditioning.

NEED THE West—which, on this question, means Washington—react negatively to every disarmament plan that comes from the Kremlin? It may be that such immediate and complete rejection is more ritualistic than realistic, and neither blunts the propaganda thrust, in which Russia is interested, nor advances the cause of effective disarmament, in which Russia is probably not interested.

Among the facts of life and death in the atomic age, we must recognize that the present deadlock on disarmament can only be resolved by the great powers. The basic cause of this deadlock, which dates back to 1946, is debate over a method of international inspection and control of armaments.

There are, however, other complicating factors. The West has long insisted that disarmament must be considered only in the larger framework of seeking political solutions for the current situations which are causing tensions between East and West. The most important of these situations is the continued partition of Germany, which vexes the West

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no end and disturbs the Soviet Union not at all. A last factor which has served to grind discussion to a halt is the West's insistence, up to this point, that President Eisenhower's "open-skies" proposal be accepted as a first step toward disarmament, since it would build confidence that each side was sincerely anxious to disarm.

These "dogmas of disarmament" account for the almost automatic rejection by the West of every Russian proposal which does not fully agree with each dogma. But the question of disarmament is literally one of life or death, and hence far too important for the West to suspend it indefinitely on points which the Soviet Union is hardly likely to accept. The Russians, for example, would seem to be justified in arguing that the full "open-skies" plan would, in its first phases, give the United States more information than it would the Soviet.

They are also justified in maintaining that any disarmament proposal must be comprehensive. Any single stage of disarmament, if separately examined, will be more advantageous to one side than the other—a fact hardly likely to insure that a first step to disarmament is ever taken. The Russians may be talking dishonestly but may be thinking realistically when they propose disarmament in such complete terms as a ban on the use of all nuclear weapons, a halt in their production and the destruction of all existing stockpiles. In our age, there is, perhaps, no such thing as gradualism in effective disarmament.

A final obstacle to any meaningful discussion about disarmament is the fact that each side feels it cannot trust the other; hence, the reliance of the West on such "confidence-building measures" as the open-skies proposal and Soviet willingness to negotiate the integration of Germany.

Such reliance on mutual trust and confidence is ultimately irrelevant and presently dangerous. Disarmament proposals must be based on mutual suspicion and distrust. The trust of each side must be in the effectiveness of the inspection and control system proposed, not in the people who are being inspected.

Considerations such as these make us hope that the West will use the latest Russian proposal as an occasion for a reexamination of its own thinking on disarmament, in the hope that from the Soviet tangle of propagandistic assertions may be salvaged at least one point for further negotiation. Such a move would, at least, not leave the Soviet on the world stage delivering a monologue about peace.

NEXT WEEK

THOMAS MOLNAR writes about Georges Bernanos as a novelist, in the Christmas Book Number.

"The world of Bernanos' novels reflects his main preoccupation: what is the position of the saint in the midst of a world teeming with the most complicated, the most sophisticated forms of evil? But, first of all, who is a saint? and what is evil? What happens when these two poles of spirituality come into contact? These are the problems that Bernanos pursues in all his works, and in his political writings no less than in his novels. The spiritual man is not a strictly religious apparition: he is, rather, the man with a positive life whose whole being is heavy with the weight of God in him."

TO REBUILD AN ALLIANCE

WHEN BRITAIN and France embarked on their Suez adventure without the power to see it through, they set off a chain of disastrous circumstances. As things turned out they could hardly have done worse if they had deliberately set out to heap up advantages for the Soviet Union in the Middle East, in Eastern Europe and throughout the world. From either a short-term or a long-range view their strike at Egypt was a gross miscalculation.

Apparently our British and French allies issued their "ultimatum" and took off for Suez without prior consultation with the United States. We are not directly responsible. Yet French and British exasperation over our Middle Eastern policy with its tendency to change specifications in midstream did lead to their ill-starred action. We cannot be absolved of all responsibility for their plight. More than that, if the Soviet Union is not to call the play at every turn, it is up to the United States to rescue its over-extended partners in the interests of the Atlantic alliance.

Satisfactory means of repairing the breach in our alliance are needed but hard to come by. The Anglo-French descent on Egypt has gravely alienated the whole Afro-Asian world. It simply is not feasible for the United States to choose between the two groups of powers. Yet even in the embattled Middle East there is one objective on which virtually all these parties could agree as a general principle: to keep control of the Middle East out of the eager hands of Soviet Russia. In order to achieve this France and Britain will have to show

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themselves compliant to UN directives, with the encouragement of the United States. Along with this would have to go far sterner American warnings about Russian "volunteers" than have so far gone forth from Washington.

Rescue of our allies in the Middle East would involve an economic side—particularly the sustaining of Europe's oil supply, even if marked increases of our domestic production and exports are required. An assured supply of oil would serve as one of the inducements for Anglo-French cooperation with the UN and the United States.

There is another way in which the United States can seek to maintain strong friendships with both the Anglo-French and Afro-Asian worlds. That is to differentiate between the defense of Western Europe and the problems of the non-NATO world. In the first instance our alliance would be total, in the other on a largely consultative basis. Even here, acting on a well-formulated, consistent, long-range policy, the United States could use its good offices with France and Britain on behalf of the aspirations of the colonial peoples. All along, the United States favored eventual independence for the various colonies. What we have advocated is thoroughgoing and consistent programs by which the colonial powers will prepare these dependent peoples for self-government within a reasonable and explicitly scheduled period of time. Our allies are now in no position not to listen.

All this will be difficult, but with the Soviet Union making headway and getting more menacing by the day, is there any choice but to bolster NATO? We cannot count on the UN alone with the veto threat in the Security Council and the swelled Afro-Asian membership able similarly to thwart action by the Assembly. On occasions calling for a show of force against further aggression, it will be far more effective if this is in the name of NATO rather than the United States alone.

The undeniable gravity of the situation calls for a new dimension of vision in Washington. If we bring forward a convincing joint program, Britain and France can more readily accept the concessions which the consequences of their folly and the common defense demands of them. We cannot afford delay in taking the initiative.

THE BISHOPS' STATEMENT

THE CATHOLIC Bishops of the United States have expressed their trust and hope in the United Nations at a crucial point in its history. After saying in their annual message that it was "neither the time nor the place to review its history or to pass judgment on its achievement," the Bishops state that "the fact remains that it [the UN] offers the only present promise we have for sustained peace in our time; peace with any approximation of justice."

Although the United States was instrumental in founding the UN and the headquarters of the organization are in New York, many Americans have looked at it askance, questioning its function, its organization and its effectiveness. The positive accomplishments wrought by the UN in the first ten years of its existence convinced many of the skeptical that the UN had a necessary function in world affairs. Less dramatic than the historic stand in Korea were the vital loans of the World Bank; the work of the worldwide Children's Fund, and of the Food and Agriculture Organization; the UN aid in major, natural catastrophes. And the harsh events in Eastern Europe and the Middle East have once again stressed its importance as a forum of international debate and a place to form world opinion.

Now, with the increased reliance that many nations, particularly the United States, have placed upon the UN, it is being put to an historic test. For, as Prime Minister Eden said in an address in which he was somewhat critical of the UN, "the creation of an armed police force that could restore peace in the Middle East and promote a general settlement would be 'a watershed of history.' " The United Nations' Emergency Force, that small blue-helmeted band now in Egypt, is scarcely the police force of which Mr. Eden spoke, but it may provide the nucleus. Further reliance is placed upon the UN by the present Administration which is doing its best to achieve some respite for the battered Hungarians and to keep Soviet "volunteers" out of the Middle East through means provided by the UN.

It may be, as even critics sympathetic to the UN have suggested, that some countries are asking more of the UN than, at this stage of development, they have a right to expect. This is a judgment that is open to reasonable debate. But there can be no question today that the UN can be effective in many situations where individual countries are weak or helpless; that there is no other organization that could replace it; and that if the United States is to function most effectively within the UN it must overcome unbased opposition to the international body.

It is in this context that the Bishops' statement

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has its full meaning. World peace is being subjected to continual, unremitting strains. The UN is one of the means that civilized nations have of maintaining peace where it exists and of limiting conflict and brutalities where they occur. In spite of its admitted limitations and imperfections, the UN bears heavy responsibilities today. It contains and expresses the hopes of millions. The statement of the Catholic Bishops, firm and strong in its affirmation, should enlighten the unlearned, persuade the skeptical, and bring to the UN additional support that it both needs and deserves.

THE MONTGOMERY VICTORY

IT WAS on December 1, 1955, almost one year ago today, that Mrs. Rosa Parks of Montgomery, Alabama, was arrested when she refused to give up her bus seat to another passenger. For the other passenger was white and Mrs. Parks is a Negro. The reaction to her arrest was startling and unique in the history of the United States. For the Montgomery Negroes, in an unprecedented, concerted movement, boycotted the Montgomery bus lines. They proclaimed that "the right to protest is the glory of democracy." In their year-long boycott they have unfurled that glory for all who can see.

When the boycott was moving into its fourth month The Commonweal stated that "by this stirring and concerted action these Negroes teach the nation, and particularly the South, that the Negro in America is determined to assume his proper stature. They teach the nation, and particularly the North, what the Negro can do to bring about the cure of the obsolescence in our land. They teach the nation, and particularly other Negroes, the way to peaceful integration." Now as the boycott draws to its end, the lesson should be firmly learned.

After a group of Negroes challenged the transit segregation laws, and a Federal court declared both the Montgomery city code and the Alabama state law unconstitutional, white officials of Alabama appealed to the Supreme Court. The decision was in accord with other, recent decisions of the Supreme Court—it upheld unanimously the lower court's ruling against transit segregation.

The decision is another hard-earned, well-deserved victory for the Negroes in this country. But they face yet further struggles even in Alabama, for Alabama officials warned that "violence and bloodshed" would follow any attempt to act on the decision. The threat, however sincere, is open acknowledgment that the white officials have exhausted their legal obstruction to integration. In extra-legal conflicts they must know that they are doomed to failure. The white officials of Alabama may deny it as they will, but the future of the conflict is clear, the outcome is inevitable. The Negroes of Montgomery have won a signal victory. It *will* be implemented.

AN EFFECT OF PRECEDENT

TWENTY-ONE years ago the American Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) confronted a growing popular opposition to this nation's participation in the Berlin Olympic Games. The evidence of wholesale persecution of the Jews and others by the upsurging Hitler regime was sweeping. It was also painfully clear that the 1936 Olympics were to be exploited to glorify the inhuman Nazi youth movement. Despite the voices raised in protest, the AAU voted (by a small margin) for the United States to take part. There is really no comparable problem about American appearance at the current Olympic Games just beginning in far-off Melbourne.

But the AAU has now accepted an invitation that recalls its former callousness toward Nazi inhumanities. At the very moment the people of Hungary are being crushed to earth by an overwhelming force of Russian arms—and men, women and children by the thousands are being deported in sealed boxcars from their beloved homeland to the terrors of Soviet Russia—the AAU announces a series of home-and-home track meets between our athletes and those who comprise an integral part of the Soviet propaganda-and-war machine. What can the Hungarian patriots think of this lighthearted *camaraderie* of ours, what must be the opinion of other peoples who, in spite of every pressure, have up to now believed in their hearts that the United states is an authentic champion of human liberty. Several Western nations in protest against the atrocities in Hungary have refused even to compete with Soviet athletes and have abruptly withdrawn from Melbourne. Yet the AAU at the same moment is happy to give the USSR the satisfaction of a special series of Russo-American dual meets.

When such events are actually staged, international sports contests do not invariably function as fomenters of goodwill. Yet that is what is generally believed about them. For American sports officials to agree to such an interchange of courtesies with the Soviet Union at this tragic hour is to play right along with the Kremlin's game of masking its true countenance.

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Politics of Hunger

"TO HEAR SOME OF THE COMMUNISTS TALKING ABOUT THEIR PARTY ONE WOULD ALMOST THINK THEY WERE SPEAKING ABOUT CHRISTIANITY"

GEORGE LORIMER

MELFI WAS once the capital of the Norman emperor Frederick the Second. Even today his castle stronghold rises perfectly preserved on the hill above the town. It has survived not only numerous military assaults, but also the earthquakes which have regularly crumbled vast sections of Melfi. Today the castle serves as a home for hundreds of people who, having no place to go, have taken over one or another of its empty rooms. And the great throne of Frederick has often been used as a place to stack bags of grain.

In spite of the numerous government agencies which have been formed to wipe out misery in the South, and in spite of the rich farmland which surrounds the town, destitution is the rule in Melfi. Two-thirds of its people live in sub-standard houses, and in the midst of the harvest season (when there are the maximum number of jobs) there is still a high percentage of unemployed. For one who has not grown up here, living conditions must come as a terrible shock; for one who has always been here they are simply tradition, not nice but unchanging.

Michele Mosucca, when he is not unemployed, is a *bracciante* (farm hand). He lives in Vico San Pietro 35, in a house, if one room 15′ x 15′ without toilet, water or light really counts as a house. He lives with his wife, four children, a donkey and a pig. The family income last year, from all sources, was approximately two hundred and fifty dollars. With this the rent must be paid, the food must be bought and the family clothed.

The cost of living in Melfi is low, not because prices are low (they are surprisingly high considering the income of the population), but because one manages to do without even the essentials of life. Mosucca, for example, like many others, eats only one full meal a day. His basic diet is bread, *pasta,* beans, a bit of oil, and in the summertime vegetables and fruit. He never tastes either meat or sugar.

Giuseppe Racioppi is another farm hand. He managed to get a hectare of land in the Land Reform. He lives with his wife and three children in one room, 12′ x 12′, below the ground level in Via Villa Franca 3. The house lacks water and toilet. Last year Racioppi earned close to the equivalent of two hundred dollars, and this year, if his wheat crop goes well, he hopes to make about three hundred dollars. It is not surprising at all to learn that in 1949 one of his children died through a combination of malnutrition and unhygienic living conditions.

Donato Fornuto has been luckier than the others, in that he received a small farm (five or six hectares) in the Land Reform. He lives in Vico Madonelle 22 with his wife and eight children, in one room 12′ x 21′. Last year he earned the equivalent of two hundred and seventy-five dollars. He hopes to earn more in the future. Fornuto does not talk about politics; in fact, he prefers not to discuss his situation at all, for fear that through one word too many he will lose his piece of land.

There is De Gregorio, who has two rooms for his family and works several hours walk away. "I must decide in the evening," he explained, "if I want to eat, wash or sleep. There is no time to do everything."

FAR MORE striking than the desperate conditions which these people must endure is the way in which they maintain their humanity and refuse to be crushed. In the dampest, most depressing cellar one finds pictures on the walls and maybe a flower on the table. And then there are the children. Certainly there are many people who say that there are too many children in Melfi, and there are many who consider it practically sinful to have so many children when one cannot give them enough to eat.

But the parents and grandparents of Melfi are not among these. In Melfi, children are precious. They are life. They are tomorrow. They are hope, and, above all, they are joy. Anyone who walks through the streets of the town must be impressed by the gaiety of the children. They laugh and they play, and they don't care about the ugly houses for the whole out-of-doors is theirs. They are the desperate creation of

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people who without them have nothing. But in the winter-time the children die. They die because of the houses; they die because they do not have enough to eat; they die because medicine is too expensive. It is not unusual to find a large family like that of Rocco Del Giudice. He had seven children; three grew up.

What can be done about Melfi and the many other Southern towns like it? There are many people with good ideas, but everything must follow the tortuous path of Southern custom, which means that all improvements come slowly and many come not at all. The Land Reform is a fine example. It arrived in Melfi with its huge machinery and did expropriate a great deal of land; but it managed to build only ninety-seven houses. Then it complicated things by cutting the land into too many uneconomic packages. (The theory would seem to have been that each package would automatically buy a vote.) This has not proved to be the case and the exaggerated division has succeeded in making rational agriculture difficult.

There is an old Italian proverb which states: "An empty sack won't stand up," and so one finds it in Melfi. Politics and ideas are based on bread and work rather than on ideals or even practical government. One evening we were standing in the Piazza chatting (in Melfi no one has the money to spend in a bar for even a cup of coffee, so in the evening the people just go and chat in the Piazza). One young Communist explained his point of view: "You may talk about God or democracy or anything you like, but you have a full stomach. I do not, so I do not care about those things. All that interests me is that I eat and that my family eats."

It is not surprising to discover that many men in Melfi have membership cards in conflicting organizations. A man may be a member of the CISL (the Christian Democrat-inspired union) because he feels it is close to the government and will help him find work. Then he may also, though not quite so openly, be a member of the Communist Party, as he feels it is the only party interested in his good. In Melfi the manual worker finds it hard to feel overly attached to the Christian Democratic Party. The party is completely run by conservative men, none of them workers. At one time there was a *bracciante* among the leaders, but he refused to cooperate in certain discriminative practices and was removed from his job. One woman talking about this sounded like a character from Silone: "Let them do what they want now—we shall wait. Our time is soon and then we will say what is to be done. It will be our word that counts. They cannot go on like this much longer."

A PRIEST told me: "It is very difficult for one who is not a Southerner to understand the South. For example, the North would like to make great reforms here, but all the Southerner wants to do is leave. Then, what reform is done, is done in a way which is difficult for us to accept. Take the Land Reform. It was a good idea, but in Rome they thought they could change hundreds of years of our history overnight. They thought that the peasant who lives here in Lucania could be made to live on a farm in isolation, like the peasant in Tuscany, with few neighbors and they shouting distance away. Here we are used to living in towns, towns so crowded that when you step out of your door you run into throngs of people. I think it would have been far better to try to build new centers nearer to the fields."

He also told us of the difficult role of the Church: "We are cut off from our people. It is not hard to understand why. Until recently the clergy came principally from the noble and well-to-do families. The peasant and worker did not feel any great attachment to these priests, his social superiors."

Another reason for this detachment is the temporal position of the Church in Italy today. We visited one especially decrepit house. The tenant lamented that the landlord refused to make basic repairs. Although this was a cellar apartment, the roof leaked so badly that with every rain the water came right through. It turned out that this house was the property of one of the parishes. The fact that the clergy is itself often on the verge of destitution and cannot afford repairs on the property which provides the parish's small income does not mitigate the bad impression made by examples such as this.

In many parts of Italy the labor unions have served as an active force for the defense of the working people, but in the South their role appears quite different. The secretary of the CISL explained: "It is next to impossible to bring about any kind of reform through strikes. Here, nobody can afford to lose even a day's pay, and certainly he does not want to jeopardize his job. In the recent agricultural strike which we won on the national scale, here in Lucania there was so little participation that when the secretary of the CGIL (the Communist union) and I went to negotiate, the land-owners laughed at us and said that probably we two were the only ones on strike—for all that they could see. The only kind of strike which can have a success is the strike in reverse—that is, doing in an organized fashion work which is completely unauthorized." (The case of Danilo Dolci was an example of this. Dolci organized a group of unemployed in Sicily to do work improving a road. He was arrested and sentenced to a prison term, but the plight of the people was dramatically placed before the public.)

Actually, the main job of the unions in Melfi is to get for their men the pensions and unemployment

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checks to which they have a right. Theoretically, it is just a question of filling in the right questions; practically, it helps to know the right people.

The position of the worker in Melfi is very poor. There are many who do overtime work without compensation simply to keep their jobs. The Christian Democratic city government itself sets a horrifying example by the way it treats its employees. The street-cleaners, for example, must work 365 days in the year; they have no time off on Christmas, Easter or any other day. But they dare not complain; too many other people would be happy to have their jobs.

THE COMMUNISTS are very active in Melfi. Their union, the CGIL, does a good job and thus has far more members than the CISL. The secretary of the CGIL said: "Once I was not a Communist. I even named my last child Fiorello after the mayor of New York. But now I have seen that our only hope is in a socialistic system. Here in Melfi we must have better administration, people must pay their taxes. If our party ran the government we would set up a lot of model co-operatives and enterprises under the wing of the city council. Actually, we of the CGIL have already made a try to begin. We have made a small co-operative. We are able to sell the farm products for a lower price than the others and at the same time pay the farmers more. It is a good system."

The Communists know that education is a kind of food to the starving man, for no man starves in body alone. We spoke with one young Communist who said: "Now I feel that I can talk with people. I know things, I have things to say. Before, I was very ignorant. I did not want to talk because I knew that I was ignorant. But now that has changed, and all that I have learned I have learned because the Party has taught me."

To hear some of the Communists in Melfi talking about their Party one would almost think they were speaking of Christianity: "We want peace; we should be friends. Why should we fight one another? We are brothers. We believe in all men—we believe everyone is important. With the capitalists it is different." "My brother was killed in the war. The government paid his wife. They paid as much as they would pay for a good steer to slaughter." "It is not true that we do not believe in God. Excommunication?" with a friendly laugh, "yes, but only the directors of the party. Who would excommunicate us, the poor people? No, it is not on our heads."

One can see conflict in Melfi now, but in Melfi, as in the rest of the South, one cannot see the outcome. Here things do not seem to move toward logical conclusions. Above all, there seems to be very little change, either for better or for worse. The castle still defies the years, the houses become more decrepit, and the children still die when winter comes.

A POSITIVE PROGRAM

The Low-Income Farmer

MARTIN E. SCHIRBER

THE FAMILY FARM still holds a deep attraction for many Americans. Although only thirteen per cent of our population lives on the farm, it is often cited as the ideal environment in which to provide "space, light, and air for the family," and to achieve the values of security, independence, and ownership of productive property.

This interest is reflected in Congress and agencies of the government. The family farm has been the subject of study by subcommittees in both the House and Senate in recent months, and it is anxiously watched over by the Department of Agriculture.

In view of the widespread belief in the social value of the family-type farm, it is not surprising that people should be alarmed by statistics which on the surface might seem to indicate that it is going the way of the horse and buggy. Defenders of the family farm find it hard to resist the temptation to write somber letters to editors or Congressmen when they read that the number of farms has fallen by more than a million in the decade from 1944 to 1954. Their anxiety increases when they read that the number of Class I farms (those with annual sales of $25,000 and over) has risen from 103,000 to 134,000 in the last five years.

However, while it would be idle to be complacent about some of these trends, a closer look at what is happening may not only offer some consolation, but also help to guide policy formation along constructive lines. In the first place, the increase in the number of

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Class I farms does not necessarily imply the weakening of the family farm. There is good reason to believe that a large proportion of these farms still meet the specifications of the family farm, and that the underlying conditions in most types of farming militate against the rise of the dreaded "factories in the fields."

According to a commonly used definition, a family farm is one on which most of the managerial decisions are made by the farm operator, most of the labor is supplied by the farm family, and an adequate income is provided for the family. As has often been pointed out, this definition fits a wide variety of farms—ranging from a three-acre truck garden in Connecticut to a five-thousand-acre ranch in New Mexico. One indication that the family farm so defined is not losing ground to corporation farming is that there is no sign of an increase in the proportion of hired workers on farms. Although the number of family workers has been falling since 1910, the number of hired workers has fallen with equal or greater rapidity.

In the leading cornbelt state of Iowa, moreover, labor costs (including payment for labor of the members of the farm family) on Class I farms average only twice as much as the labor costs on the medium-sized farms (annual gross sales of five to ten thousand dollars), which are the most numerous and typical of Iowa farms. Thus it is evident that many of the larger farms are not corporate monsters relying heavily upon hired labor.

One of the reasons why farms tend to increase in size is that average costs fall as output increases; but there are limits to this process. Studies of farm size in the cash-grain section of Iowa, where mechanization has been most rapid and increase in farm size most likely, show that average costs fall rapidly as the size of the farm increases from eighty to one hundred and sixty acres. The fall is more gradual up to about two hundred and forty acres, and beyond that there is little cost advantage to be gained by larger acreage. Thus a farm of two hundred and forty acres or less, which would ordinarily qualify as a family farm, can realize the major economies resulting from size. There is little evidence of a widespread tendency to overstep those limits.

THE FAMILY farm is endangered, then, not so much by outgrowing family proportions as by failing to reach them. Even here, however, the 1954 agricultural census offers some encouragement. While the number of farms with gross sales of twenty-five hundred to twenty-five thousand dollars declined by less than one per cent between 1949 and 1954, the greater part of the total decline in number of farms occurred in under-sized ventures and in part-time and residential farms.

It would be a mistake to picture these families leaving shady, well-kept farmsteads with household goods piled high in the family truck, bound they knew not where. Almost all of the families who left farms between 1949 and 1954 had received from farming in the previous year gross incomes of less than twenty-five hundred dollars. There were almost a million and a half farm families whose total income from all sources in 1954 was less than one thousand dollars. There is considerable evidence, then, that most of these families were pulled off farms by favorable employment opportunities rather than pushed off by unfavorable developments in agriculture.

Since the census categories of commercial, part-time, and residential farms depend primarily upon the source of the family income and the number of days the operator works off the farm, small farmers can slip from one category to another simply by increasing the number of days of off-farm work, or by having the family as a whole earn more from non-farm employment than from the sale of farm products. The 1954 census of agriculture reports that 36.5 percent of the farm people were working off the farm in 1954 as compared with 30 percent in 1950 and 21 percent in 1940.

Studies in various low-income areas also indicate that more and more farm families are deriving an increasing share of their incomes from non-farm jobs. For instance, the establishment of a Naval Ammunition Depot in the low-income area of southeastern Oklahoma drew over one thousand commuters from a distance of fifty miles or more. A family which concentrates so completely on non-farm employment that its production of farm products falls below one hundred and fifty dollars would slip out of farming entirely, as far as the census is concerned—without, however, leaving the farm.

These considerations, as well as surveys of underemployment in blighted areas, indicate that there is no simple solution to the problem of the low-income farmer. General farm programs designed to increase consumption, reduce costs, raise prices, or expand exports do not go to the root of the problem.

Least of all can we place any reliance on price support programs. It is significant that the recommendation for price supports at ninety per cent of parity in the

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interim report of the House Subcommittee on Family Farms, issued in March, 1956, was omitted from the final report of August 1.

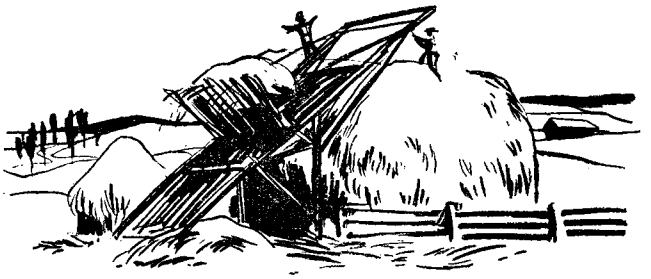
The members of the subcommittee, along with many other students of the problem, have become convinced that price policy is no solution for the majority of the nearly three million farmers whose sales of farm products are less than twenty-five hundred dollars per year. Their resources are so meager and their methods of production so inefficient that the lion's share of the federal largesse goes to the top one-fourth of the farmers who produce over three-fourths of the total farm output.

Similarly, the government does not benefit the small farmer if it sets an upper level to the amount of price support that can be enjoyed by any one farmer, as proposed by the Family Farm Subcommittee. It would be scant consolation to the small farmer to be told that while he could get price supports for his entire five bales of cotton or four hundred bushels of wheat, the big operator would be limited to a total support benefit of twenty or twenty-five thousand dollars. For the same reason, production payments of the Brannan type, while more flexible and applicable to a wider range of products, would be of little benefit to the low-income farmer unless they were based upon a support level of up to two hundred per cent of parity. The principal effect of subsidizing small farmers through direct payments would be to freeze them and their resources in their present unproductive uses.

A PROBLEM of such complexity will be solved only through the patient, painstaking efforts of local leaders and representatives of all levels of government. Long-run programs directed at improving health, education, mobility, and social and economic organization will be needed. A number of such constructive proposals have been made, and deserve serious attention. The most promising are these:

Maintenance of full employment. Students of the farm problem in the 1930's and 1940's used to imply that there was no agricultural problem which full employment in industry could not solve. Various studies showed that retail sales of high-protein foods such as meat, eggs and dairy products, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables, tended to vary closely with urban incomes.

The further we get from the depressed thirties, however, the less this relationship tends to hold. As urban incomes continue to increase, the smaller the proportion of any increase that will be spent for food, and greater the proportion spent for the services purchased along with food (packaging, refrigeration, transportation, partial processing). Nevertheless, as income increases, farmers may realize some benefit from the substitution of superior foods like meat, dairy products, and fruit for foods like potatoes, cereals, and canned vegetables, because the farmer's share of the consumer's dollar is much larger for products such as beef (fifty-nine cents out of the consumer's dollar) than for bread or cereals (fifteen cents out of the consumer's dollar).



But increased domestic consumption of superior foods, even if sparked by school-lunch and food-stamp plans, is not a final solution to the general farm problem. The capacity of the human stomach is no match for the steadily increasing productivity of the American farmer. Although diets have changed drastically since the early 1900's, the per capita consumption of food by weight has actually fallen.

Nor can we look to the increase in population to absorb our surplus output. On the basis of a careful study of population and production trends, Professors Black of Harvard and Bonner of Michigan State estimate that the increase in demand for food as a result of population increase and improvement of diets will not exceed seventeen per cent by 1965. On the other hand, by simply putting into wide use the improved methods of farming already known and tested, we could increase total output by more than fifty per cent within the next ten years.

Nevertheless, since under-employment is the principal affliction of low-income farming areas, the maintenance of full employment in the economy as a whole is a necessary condition for the success of other programs directed at the low-income farmer. No members of an under-employed farm family will trade the partial but certain employment of the farm for the full but uncertain employment in industry.

Education. The level of education in areas designated as low-income areas by the Department of Agriculture is considerably below that for the rest of the country. These would be logical spots to initiate federal aid to education. General federal aid legislation will continue to face formidable opposition from a variety of elements in our society. But a very plausible case could be made for aid to specifically designated low-income areas. Since emigration from these areas is extremely high, it is only fair that the entire country should share in the cost of educating youths who will soon be seeking opportunities of better employment in other parts of the country.

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Migration. A free economy presupposes the willingness and ability of workers to move from points where they are under-employed and poorly paid to points where they will be fully employed at higher wages. Because of the meager resources and high birth rates in many of the low-income areas, about two hundred farm boys will reach the employable age in the present decade for every one hundred older farmers who will die or retire. This means that about one-half of the young men on farms in these areas will have to find jobs outside of agriculture.

An expanded program of job information and vocational guidance, supplemented possibly with low-cost loans to help families move to where they could be fully employed, would enable under-employed farm workers to take advantage of job opportunities in other parts of the country. Such information would also facilitate labor mobility within the low-income area itself, through commuting to nearby places of employment.

Industrialization. If workers will not move to resources, resources can often be moved to workers. If manufacturing plants are established in surplus labor areas, the under-employed farm people can live at home and supplement the family income by working in industry. The cumulative impact of such a development is outlined by Professor Nicholls of Vanderbilt University. As industrialization proceeds, capital tends to flow into the area and increases the lending power of the local financial institutions. The competition for labor resulting from increased employment off the farm obliges farm operators to use their labor supply more efficiently. This involves acquiring better equipment, seed, stock, etc., and the lending institutions are now able to make loans for such purposes.

As employment in manufacturing increases, job openings occur in the service industries. The general increase in employment results in an increase in demand for the products of the surrounding farms, while the steady rise in incomes makes it possible for communities to provide better educational and other public services. In time the whole level of production and living will have been raised.

Loans and technical assistance. Migration from farms in low-income areas will not improve incomes and living conditions for those who are left behind unless capital flows into the area to finance the reorganization of farms and the introduction of improved methods of farming. But this inflow of capital may be largely ineffective unless accompanied by increased technical know-how. The Farmers Home Administration (formerly the Farm Security Administration) was established to carry out just this sort of program. It makes long-term loans at low rates of interest for the purchase of farms, and shorter-term loans for livestock, equipment, etc. When making a loan to a farm family, the FHA supervisor works out a farm-and-home plan with the farm family, to enable it to use the borrowed capital to best advantage.

Until recently the FHA has labored almost alone in the field, and it has hardly scratched the surface. The last Congress increased its lending powers and appropriations, however, and it has been given a leading role in the Rural Development Program instituted in 1955, which now covers fifty-five "pilot" counties in twenty-four states.

The program provides for additional appropriations for the Extension Service to hire special extension agents to work with low-income farmers, for the Soil Conservation Service to increase their staffs in pilot counties, and for the Agricultural Research Service to carry on research for the benefit of low-income farmers. Other federal and state agencies (e.g., the Forest Serice will help small farmers to make better use of their woodlot resources) are also offering technical and advisory services.

Although the appropriations are modest in the extreme and the areas reached insignificant in relation to the size of the problem (only fifty-five of the twelve hundred low-income counties) it is probable that the program will stand a better chance of success if it proceeds slowly and gains local support.

DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE requires that society should come to the assistance of disadvantaged groups; but very often such aid can wisely take the form, not of extorting a higher price for the good or service produced by the group, but rather of assisting them to put themselves in a position where they can increase the value of their contribution to social and economic life. Such a remedy is slow and unspectacular; it cannot be achieved by merely passing a law or making an appropriation; but it has the advantage of permitting the disadvantaged persons themselves, as well as public-minded citizens in general, to cooperate actively in a program of reconstruction which will benefit the entire community.

A demonstration of such cooperation is now taking place in the little town of Rolla, North Dakota. In order to increase the employment opportunities in that community, the local priest and community leaders worked out a plan with the federal government and the Bulova Watch Company to establish a small factory to grind jewels for precision instruments used in planes and other war machines.

We may regret the necessity which makes the rehabilitation of a stagnant community depend upon production for war, but there is no inherent reason why, once war tensions have eased, such imaginative cooperation might not be directed to producing precision instruments for peace.

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KHRUSHCHEV'S CASE FOR AMERICA

A LITTLE over two years ago the Los Angeles *Mirror* polled two hundred and fifty teachers of history and political science in the city's high schools. One out of every five of the teachers told the *Mirror* that he regarded classroom discussion of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights as dangerous. To bring up the subject, especially the Fifth Amendment, might be misunderstood, the teachers felt. A good word for the Bill of Rights could be misinterpreted as evidence of Communist sympathy.

The teachers were altogether too timid for their own good of course, but there was a kernel of reason in their fear. For in recent years the American Communists have prated endlessly about the Bill of Rights. A man would have to be an idiot to give any credence to these declarations of love for the democratic processes. Sad to say, though, the Party's civil-liberties line succeeded in silencing some who should have been vocal at a time when democratic procedures were under severe attack. The Communist embrace, in this case as in others, was lethal.

Communism and the Bill of Rights have nothing in common. The most vivid illustration of that fairly elementary point was made a few months ago, not in the United States but in Russia and by Nikita S. Khrushchev in his denunciation of Stalinism.

In a booklet just published by the Fund for the Republic, Walter Millis has set down excerpts from Khrushchev's speech beside appropriate sections of the American Constitution. The effect is devastating.

For instance, Khrushchev explained how Stalin annihilated controversy. The dictator branded his opponents as "enemies of the people" and then had them killed as traitors. As long as we respect our Constitution this could not happen here. The Constitution provides that no one shall be convicted of treason except on the basis of an overt act and according to evidence supplied by two different persons.

Khrushchev pointed out that there was a gap of thirteen years between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Congresses of the Soviet Communist Party. Our Constitution requires the Congress to meet at least once every year.

Stalin, according to Khrushchev, ordered "mass arrests, deportations of many thousands of people; execution without trial and without normal investigation created conditions of insecurity, fear and even desperation." In contrast, the powers of the American President are carefully spelled out in the Constitution and limited by a system of checks and balances.

The blood of innocent men and women who, after torture, accused themselves of unbelievable crimes, according to Khrushchev, has purpled the pages of Soviet history. The Fifth Amendment to our Constitution provides that no one shall be held to answer for a major crime without first being indicted by a grand jury; no one shall be compelled to be a witness against himself; no one shall lose life, liberty or property without due process of law.

Khrushchev, recounting his tale of horror, cited directives given to Soviet investigative agencies. They were to "speed up" the cases of those accused of "acts of terror." Other directives given to Soviet courts demanded that such persons be sentenced to death. Finally, he told of the demand that death sentences be carried out immediately after judgment was passed. . . . The American Constitution provides for jury trials. Our system provides that no man's fate is finally sealed until he has exhausted the courts of appeal.

Khrushchev illustrated his speech with numerous examples of barbarity and torture—examples of the cruel and unusual punishments specifically proscribed by our Constitution.

Finally he ended his speech by declaring that "we can not let this matter get out of the party, especially not the press. . . ." Stalin or no Stalin, the notion of a free press is unthinkable in the Kremlin.

What took place in the Soviet Union, as Khrushchev described it, can not be attributed solely to the perversity of the one evil man, Stalin. The seed of Stalinism is planted in the form of government itself.

After Khrushchev's admissions, it seems superfluous to insist that Americans who support the Soviet system and yet preach the Bill of Rights are either fools or knaves, talking out of both sides of their mouths.

In his booklet, called *Communism and Civil Liberties,* Walter Millis quotes Judge Harold R. Medina, who has given much thought to these questions. Judge Medina does not believe that the American Communists, for all their recent soul-searching, have overnight become democrats. "Their new line," he said, "is more dangerous than the subversive one of the past. The really dangerous ones in the hard core center have simply changed their strategy; it would be a very grave mistake for America to become less vigilant." But the Judge added immediately: "I'd rather see every Communist go scot free than abandon, dilute or diminish a single one of our Constitutional freedoms, and that includes the Fifth Amendment." Judge Medina, of all people, does not speak this way because he is "soft on Communism." It is because he is strong on civil liberties. He knows that these liberties, in the natural order of things, are our first line of defense.

JOHN COGLEY.

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Christ in a Novel

JAMES KRITZECK

IT MUST BE evident to thoughtful persons that recent and current "crises" in the Islamic world have their origins in problems both older and deeper than those generated by the second world war. What may not be equally evident to them, however, is the fact that each major encounter between Islam and the West in history has been characterized by a remorseless and belligerent lack of mutual understanding. Arnold Toynbee, considering this dismal fact (one which, by the way, he is even more than ordinarily competent to judge) in *Civilization on Trial*, suggested that in the contemporary encounter "the odds are more heavily against [Islam] than they were even at the most critical moment of the Crusades." But he warned that "on two historic occasions in the past, Islam has been the sign in which an oriental society has risen up victoriously against an occidental intruder," and "if the present situation of mankind were to precipitate a 'race war,' Islam might be moved to play her historic role again."

The situation has changed considerably, but not necessarily for the better, since Toynbee wrote. Many would now consider the Islamic world to possess, not, to be sure, an upper hand, but at least a potent peerage in world affairs. But for all the skyrocket success of the pocketbook Koran and the many new Western books in Arabic translation, the state of mutual ignorance cannot be said to have enormously improved. Both sides remain extremely impatient; neither side appears genuinely convinced of the necessity of giving serious (and therefore long) study to those things which go to make up the other. The West seems still be saying, "We want to make the world safe for democracy," and the Islamic world seems still to be saying, "We want to make ourselves safe from imperialism."

Nevertheless, a few intelligent, understanding, promising contacts do take place. Last year, in this magazine, I called attention to one of the most intelligent of them, initiated by men of the West ("Dominican Theologians of Islam," August 19, 1955). Now I should like to call attention to a no less intelligent gesture, to his co-religionists and to the West alike, by one Moslem.

Mr. Kritzeck, a regular contributor to The Commonweal on questions of Islamic culture, is a member of the faculty of the Department of Oriental Studies at Princeton.

TWO YEARS AGO a publisher in Cairo brought out a book called *The Unjust City* (*Qaryatun Zhaalimah*) by Muhammad Kamel Hussein. It might easily have been predicted that the book would be excellent, for its author is one of the most distinguished intellectuals in Egypt, a renowned physician who is a member of the Arab Academy and the Institute of Egypt and was formerly the Rector of Ibrahim University. Although the book is available only in Arabic, it has increasingly come to be recognized, though by far too limited a circle, as uniquely important.

The Unjust City is a novel, or perhaps more accurately a series of character-studies and reflections taking fictional form, about the Passion of Christ. There is nothing particularly startling, at least to anyone familiar with Islam, about a devout Moslem turning his thought to such a subject. Christ is regarded by Moslems as a holy prophet in a line which began with Adam and was brought, through the Hebrew prophets, to full and final fruition in Muhammad, the "Seal of the Prophets." In the Koran, correspondingly God's full and final revelation to mankind, there are many references to incidents in the life of Christ (even to His Virgin Birth) which do not differ, generally speaking, very significantly from those of the Gospels, or at least from certain early Christian apocrypha. Indeed, there is unequivocal recognition in the Koran of the status of the Biblical books as inspired revelation, although it is also suggested (which accounts for the fact that Moslems do not feel obliged to read the Bible) that the texts of these books have been corrupted.

There are absolutely remarkable features, none the less, about *The Unjust City*. As one of its earlier reviewers wrote, "For the first time in the history of Arabic literature, a Moslem author has taken up a theme of exceptional importance, the trial of Jesus, and has treated it with infinite respect, originality, [and] a profound sense of the problems it raises." For the book is neither polemical nor apologetical, and its author has seen with great clarity that by prescinding from the *hadeeth*, or tradition-literature, of early Islam (where many of the better-known discrepancies from the Gospels lie) and returning simply to the Koranic accounts, with some measure of corroboration and supplementation from the Gospels, it is possible to paint, for speculation, an Islamic picture of Good Friday which is at the same time extraordinarily congruent

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with that of Christianity. The very title of the book, referring to the city of Jerusalem, is Koranic, and there are innumerable phrases, reminiscences, and themes from the Koran running all through it.

The central theme of the novel, however, as set forth in a short prologue and a weighty conclusion, is the mystery of the human conscience as revealed in its effect upon those involved, in a variety of ways, with the condemnation of Christ to death. For when mankind agreed to crucify Christ, the author says, "it was their selfsame desire to kill the human conscience and to extinguish its light. . . . In this desire of theirs is revealed the supreme human disaster. In the events of that day, too, lies a study of all the forces that drive men into sin. For evil does not take place in the world unless its root lies in that desire of men to kill their conscience. . . . The events of that day, on that account, do not belong simply to the annals of the first century. They are disasters renewed every day in every individual life. All men are forever contemporaries of that immortal day. They are perpetually exposed to the sin and error into which the people of Jerusalem fell that day."

THE THEME of *The Unjust City* is developed in a series of loosely-connected episodes having to do with the actions and reactions of many persons, with as many temperaments, on Good Friday. There are flashbacks and digressions which give considerable variety to the style of the separate chapters, but the episodes are broadly arranged like a triptych, centering in order upon the Jews, the Apostles, and the Romans.

The reader is first introduced, among the Jews, to the clever young Public Prosecutor, restless over his very success in persuading the Sanhedrin to demand Christ's crucifixion, appalled by the extent to which complicity and guilt in crime can be diminished and even totally neutralized by group action, and yet, in the end, deaf to his own conscience, which tells him that there is no fault to be found in Christ. The Legal Counsellor is no less troubled; although he listens to his eloquent son expound the thesis that the only hope for Judaism is to rid itself of heretics like Christ, he remains unconvinced of the justice of the sentence, but concludes that the dictates of conscience are sometimes too difficult to obey. There is Lazarus, brought from the dead, a living symbol of conscience to those who encounter him. There is Caiaphas, brilliantly sketched, a man learned and high-purposed, sensitive and even sympathetic to aspects of Christ's teaching, yet willing to let matters take their course for the sake of the security of the Law. Finally, in the exciting scene in the Sanhedrin, those few whose consciences have forced them to speak in Christ's defense shrink back in the face of the mob's cries for His death.

Mary Magdalen's is the first Christian conscience explored by the author. He shows how her conflicting passions have led her to Christ, and then how her Roman lover is alarmed to find, as he acquires the mind of a Christian, that he, too, has a conscience. The news of Christ's condemnation reaches the Christians at the bedside of a dying woman, and a meeting of the Apostles is called. A lengthy controversy ensues as to whether or not conscience will permit them the use of force in order to rescue Christ. Many reasons are advanced for each position, but the Apostles find themselves unable to decide between them; they are willing to use force and risk their lives to save Him, but fear to contravene His teaching by doing so. They are brought word from Christ warning them against violence and urging them to devote themselves to prayer. Sadly, the Apostles comply, and the dilemma is solved.

The author draws some rather daring conclusions from his reconstruction of the decision of the Apostles. "In point of fact," he writes, "they rendered a great service to the Christian message by refraining from His rescue. That day the Christian religion defined its principles and formulated its philosophy, and out of the events of that day were fashioned the dominant character of this new religion. From them came the most awesome of its tenets concerning forgiveness and redemption. From them, too, issued that sadness which is a controlling element in the natures of the greatest adherents of Christianity, their fear of sin, their love of mortification and humiliation, the importance they attach to the sin of Adam and their belief that it is the source of the suffering which Christ underwent in order to redeem mankind from its consequences. And it may be that that is but an echo of their own great sin when they abandoned Christ to his enemies, as if it were incumbent upon Christians to atone for that sin to the end of time."

There is yet another panel in this triptych. The author enters the mind of a self-searching Roman commander who is concerned about the decline of discipline among his troops, and is also ambitious for a consulship; convinced that it is peace which has undermined the military spirit of his troops, he launches a campaign, in which victory is absolutely assured, against a neighboring village. By accident one Roman soldier, none other than Magdalen's lover, learns of a breach in the siege and decides to keep silent about it. The truth eventually reaches the commander, and the soldier is tried; his defense of conscience, like the others in the book, falls on deaf ears, and he is executed. Pilate has a tortured conscience; it is a Greek philosopher, who had witnessed the soldier's trial and execution, who draws it out. Pilate attacks philosophy, only to give expression to his ultimate despair of ever finding an answer to his celebrated question, "What

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is truth?" At the darkness of noon, under the very cross upon which Christ is dying, several of the book's characters reappear to discuss the meaning of the tragedy; for all their exchange, however, the returning light finds them the same vacillating people they were before. The last words, a long reconsideration of the Sermon on the Mount, are given to a Persian magus, speaking to the Apostles. They are words of wisdom and hope. It is perhaps symbolic of the view of the book as a whole that they are phrased by one whom painstaking learning and careful reasoning had led, out of another religion, to consider Christ.

THE UNJUST CITY is not, nor do I imagine it to have been intended as, a perfect novel. Its author has clearly produced a work which is more thoughtful than diverting. Its commentaries, even its transitions, move slowly and deliberately, only at the command of careful thought. For the book is, primarily, a vehicle for the author's philosophical speculation. The Western world is in very considerable debt to earlier Islamic philosophers for their transmission of and commentaries upon the works of Greek philosophy, but it has been a long time since any Western man has felt himself obliged to evaluate the independent philosophy of a later Moslem. This book, and what it may give rise to, could alter that state of affairs. At least it would appear somewhat ridiculous to criticize it from the point of view of a historian or an exegete, for its form instantly disarms such criticism.

The book does not, of course, face certain questions, does not even mention some, which a Christian would feel to be crucial. That these questions should be disengaged, confronted, and discussed, courteously and patiently, indeed, is precisely what anyone would hope for who is concerned by the absence of such dialogue between Christians and Moslems. But not to do it at all, or to do it with one ounce less tact and grace than Muhammad Kamel Hussein has exhibited, would be unworthy of Christians, and would merely add another tragedy to the long list which practically exhausts the history of Christian-Moslem relations.

AN APPEAL

An active Congregation of Carmelites, a purely Indian community with "no houses in the rich countries in the West," seeks to build a school and orphanage in Giridh, Bihar, where "boys and girls are badly in need of someone to give them food, shelter, love and care." Funds needed for construction are $50,000, while $8 will maintain an orphan for one month. Address: Rev. Mother Celestine, Carmel Convent, Giridih P.O., Hazaribagh Dt., Bihar, North India. (Airmail: 25c)

THE SCREEN

WHERE MOSES STOOD

EVEN THE disparagers of Cecil B. DeMille, those who insist that his movies through the years since 1913 have mainly glorified the bathtub in elaborate spectacles, will have to admit that his latest film, his seventieth, has a remarkable dignity. "The Ten Commandments" also has a remarkable running time of three hours and thirty-nine minutes and a stupendous production that cost $13,500,000. In telling the story of Moses, from his birth at a time when Rameses I ruled over Egypt and held the Children of Israel in bondage, until many years after the Exodus when the aged prophet bids farewell to his people and goes alone up Mount Nebo, Producer-director DeMille makes an earnest attempt to offend no audiences. It is true that the picture has bathing girls (Pharaoh's Daughter and attendants reclining by the Nile when Moses in his cradle of bulrushes comes floating along) and dancing girls (in the lush court of the next Pharaoh) and a seductive Egyptian Princess (played to the hilt by Anne Baxter) and plenty of foolish goings-on later in the orgy before the Golden Calf during the forty days when Moses is up on Mount Sinai; but DeMille was taking no chances of running into censor trouble with his multi-million dollar investment, and anything approaching the suggestive is seen only through a gauze darkly.

The scenes in the picture that are likely to prove offensive to some audiences, however, are those in connection with the supernatural. Viewers may be dismayed at DeMille's brashness in letting us hear the voice of God at the Burning Bush when He tells Moses to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt and later when He dictates the Ten Commandments while a spellbound Moses watches lightning etch them on stone tablets. Unfortunately, most of the trick scenes (the parting of the Red Sea, the pillar of fire, the plagues) are obvious and crude. In fact, although Mr. DeMille uses handsome Technicolor and VistaVision, his techniques throughout seem old-fashioned rather than in keeping with modern cinematography. But DeMille does excel in the large spectacular scenes of epic grandeur, the panoramic views of the Hebrew slaves building the City of Goshen, the wonderful shots of the Exodus itself, especially its start on the Avenue of Sphinxes with an inspired Moses at its head, the beautiful gate and walls of Rameses City in the background and thousands of Hebrews with their children, animals and possessions, preparing for the march. Equally exciting is the chase of the Egyptian war chariots led by a vengeful Rameses II, who hopes to strike down Moses and his people but whose army

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goes to a watery grave when the Red Sea closes.

In between the stunning spectacular scenes, many of which were photographed in Egypt, are the more intimate episodes dealing with the life of Moses. Scriptwriters Aeneas MacKenzie, Jesse L. Lasky, Jr., Jack Gariss and Fredric M. Frank based their screenplay mainly on the Bible, but because the Old Testament does not account for what happened to Moses during the thirty years after he was adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter, they turned to historians, ancient and modern, and accepted the theory that he was brought up as an Egyptian prince, a favorite of Pharaoh Sethi. This is, for the purposes of the film, quite satisfactory, although DeMille does concentrate rather lengthily on this period. To Charlton Heston fell the difficult task of portraying Moses—the Egyptian prince, the mighty general, the Hebrew slave in chains, the exiled wanderer in the wilderness, the man of God, the deliverer of his people, the great prophet receiving the Commandments on Mount Sinai. The role is almost too much for one actor, but Heston handles his assignment with effective virility and even at times with inspiration. More effective, possibly because the part is less demanding, is Yul Brynner as the cruel, powerful, absolute Rameses II, who is made to admit after defeat at the Red Sea that Moses' God is God.

Outstanding in this star-studded cast are Yvonne De Carlo as Jethro's daughter who married Moses, Nina Foch as the Pharaoh's daughter who raised Moses as a prince and loved him, and Judith Anderson as her maid who swore she'd keep the secret of Moses' heritage. The cast, which reads almost like a roster of Hollywood, also includes John Derek as Joshua, the Hebrew stone-cutter who became Moses' lieutenant and finally his successor on the journey to the Promised Land; Debra Paget as the slave girl who loved Joshua and was coveted by Dathan; Edward G. Robinson as this Dathan, a sort of Hebrew Quisling who betrayed Moses and his own people to the Egyptians; Vincent Price as the Egyptian killed by Moses; Eduard Franz as Jethro; Cedric Hardwicke as Sethi, the pharaoh whose heart was broken when he learned Moses was the Hebrew Deliverer who killed an Egyptian; Martha Scott as Moses' real mother; John Carradine as Aaron; and more actors with well-known names playing characters with well-known names. The personalities of these characters are not strictly in line with what the Old Testament sometimes scantily gives us about them, but the film makers had to be allowed a certain amount of dramatic license. Yet at times the dialogue goes even beyond dramatic license.

It was no doubt Cecil B. DeMille's intention to produce a deeply moving epic about man's struggle for freedom—freedom that would allow men to be ruled by God's law and not by the whims of tyrants. He achieves this intention best in the scenes between Moses and Rameses II and in such smaller but beautifully staged sequences as those involving the two mothers (the real mother, who feels that Moses should take his place as a Hebrew since he could never believe in Egypt's idols; and the princess mother who insists that Moses could do more good for all concerned as an Egyptian ruler) and in the intensely stirring supper-gathering of Moses and his followers as a symbol of the first Passover. But the film, which should have been called "Moses" since it concentrates on him more than the Ten Commandments, attempts to cover too much in its needlessly stretched-out running time. Crowded as it is with characters and incidents, it is more like a pageant with a series of tableaux strung on the Moses theme than a unified movie of great religious depth. In spite of this fault, "The Ten Commandments" never loses sight of the dignity of man, and its main message, stated in Moses' farewell to Joshua, is as needful today as it was then: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

THE STAGE

MR. RATTIGAN AND AUNT EDNA

IT IS STARTLING to realize that Mr. Terence Rattigan, so lately but a distinguished hand with the pastry, now wears the mantle of first playwright of the British prose theatre. At forty, he is the author of a dozen dramas of various consequence and color; his commercial success is legendary; momentarily, on Broadway, he shares with Shakespeare and Shaw and O'Neill the honor of simultaneous production of two of his plays. In London, he commands the highest resources of the West End stage: critical recognition has come with the publication of his (certainly incomplete) *Collected Plays*. In a preface to the second volume of these, Mr. Rattigan, wryly assuming a posture of defense, invites our consideration of the lady with whom, as professional dramatist, he has had to contend. Her name, he suggests, is Edna, and she is somebody's aunt—"probably a favorite one, too." She is a maiden lady of middle years, money, leisure and respectability. She knows what she likes, and it is not Kafka ("always the dark side of things, my dear"), nor Picasso ("why three noses?"), nor William Walton ("no melody at all"). They—'master' composers, novelists, painters—are free to disregard her tastes, as she is to neglect their works. But not Mr. Rattigan, the dramatist. Should he displease her, his play will die by infanticide, slaughtered by her quietly vocal disapprobation. Nor does there lie a hope of resurrection in posterity, for Mr. Rattigan is firm in his belief

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that Aunt Edna is universal and immortal: he sees her sitting on those hard stone seats at Athens, clutching her neighbor's arm in excitement, and whispering: "My dear, do look at that blood on the actor's mask. He's supposed to have blinded himself. How thrilling. I'm so glad it didn't happen on the stage, though. I always say you can rely on Sophocles."

The fantasy has charm, though perhaps a certain dark implication: Aunt Edna is Mr. Rattigan's *doppelganger*. She has dogged his passage to maturity, invisibly during the early days of frivolous pleasure; now, as the playwright stands on the threshold of a fully human drama, ominously. "Thus far and no further," says Aunt Edna. "Thou Shalt Not—or I stay away." Mr. Rattigan trembles; he knows that Aunt Edna will not permit herself to be mocked or bored or befuddled, that "to incur her displeasure is to pay a dreadful price." Yet his sensibility expands in the torpid British theatre, the sting of appetite for fresh life makes itself felt—shall he take the risk? Mr. Rattigan took it in "The Browning Version" and "The Deep Blue Sea," the two most considerable British prose dramas since the war; he makes that advance secure in "Separate Tables" (*at the Music Box*). One has one's reservations, of course—surely one would wish him better—but no longer need one fear for him: friendship with Aunt Edna, he has begun to realize, however desirable, "must never become too close."

Mr. Rattigan excels in quietly ferocious studies of the exacerbated modern temperament, besieged in a grey and diminished world of the Welfare State. He is a quick and supple observer, sketching background with a firm, shaded draughtsmanship; the foreground is cloudy with a genteel torment. The figures arrested at the center of his plays—the monotonously obsessive Hester Collyer; Crocker-Harris, the schoolmaster with ashes in his mouth; the panicked, sexually nasty divorcee in "Separate Tables"— have reached a point of crumpled pathos and desperation: sentenced to discover their smallness, they sit, dazed, in the cage. A life of ineffable, comforting banality flows about them —how to find the way back? Mr. Rattigan denies them a cleansing tragic exaltation: rather he suggests, in the person of an opposing, disinterested figure, a possibility neither of happiness nor of doom, but of control.

The prospect is dispiritingly suburban: the Eumenides will never brush this Bournemouth parlor with their healing grace, nor will the rites of war speak loudly for this cuckolded schoolmaster. The fate in which Mr. Rattigan permits these characters to come to rest does not represent an indeterminate sliding into sentimentality; it is wholly consistent with the imaginative terms of the dramatist's world. He has seen the tragedy of these figures to lie precisely in the fact that—as Shaw wrote of the real-life Hedda Gablers—they do *not* shoot themselves. Tragedy, of course, is not life, and Mr. Rattigan may develop in time the range and dilating vision to trace a pattern in the messages of disaster he so sensitively records: for the moment, he registers without comment, as do we daily, their numbing impact.

TWO vignettes of personal anguish, limned against a common background, constitute "Separate Tables." The first, beginning with the competent manner and interest of Maugham, darkens to a temperamental intensity not unworthy of Strindberg: this washed-up Laborite M.P. and his frigid, glossy, vulnerable ex-wife are bound in a sadistic tangle of egotism, lust and abasement which Mr. Rattigan potently unravels. The dramatist has quietly discerned that, where God and Society were once our whipping boys, now Sex is, and he has written here a reticent commentary on the needs and disguises of love, with the ring, if not quite the substance, of authentic experience. I am of minority opinion in finding the second anecdote of the evening less considerable. Its moral impulse is generous: Mr. Rattigan asks our imaginative sympathy for the maladjusted and maladroit—for misfits such as the hysterical spinster, a thumping Freudian case, chained to mama, and the seedy military fraud who is exposed as a masher—and we gladly give it, but the manipulation of this response seems curiously redundant and meager. Plainly, Mr. Rattigan has composed from the outside a thesis drama, in which form his strength does not lie; he smooths and elides the grittiness of moral realism too comfortably. The play is a doctrinaire exercise in the liberal sentiments, and it cannot transcend a certain provincial smugness.

The ensemble playing in "Separate Tables" is splendidly knotty, cross-grained with wit and social sensibility to the texture of contemporary middle-class English life. In the second episode, Miss Margaret Leighton and Mr. Eric Portman score as virtuosi, miniaturists in deadly, drab portraiture. In the first—altogether of a richer human substance—they dazzle with truth. Mr. Portman's moral pressure, his tumultuous vitality and jets of feeling, fill out a large scale figure. Miss Leighton, trafficking in shades and highlights, gives nonetheless a performance unique in the prose theatre. Her character is defined with exactness and security of line, at no sacrifice of a reverberating richness of implication; its theatre life is totally communicated. The authority and art with which, in the second scene, Miss Leighton keeps the character in full light of consciousness, exposing its blend of motifs and warring impulses—the lust to dominate, the sexual coldness, the emotional voracity—are beyond telling. One has known moments of static excellence, but how rare and wonderful in theatre is this discovery

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and translation into art of the soul and the self describing the unbroken curve of recognition, desire, act.

"The Sleeping Prince" (*at the Coronet*) should have pleased Aunt Edna. A rococo fairy tale, gilded with Ruritanian elegance, it was composed by Mr. Rattigan, a larkish patriot, to embellish the *grande ambiance* of the Coronation. An amorous duke and his artful dodging chorus girl sport slyly and illicitly through its velvet corridors, but here Mr. Rattigan's sense of theatre takes the ascendancy over his sense of drama. The piece demands an infusion of personal glamour which Sir Laurence Olivier, smoldering and sleek, gave it in London. Mr. Michael Redgrave, taking the part as a respite from his Trojan labors of last season, cannot suggest imaginatively this kind of romanticism. His vein is the intelligent masculine, which he works supremely; as the leering amorist, he plainly could not love his chorus girl so much, loved he not honor more. Miss Barbara Bel Geddes' creamy, scrubbed dewiness is piquant, but rather wears; alternately, she wants gaucherie and shrewdness. Miss Cathleen Nesbitt has a liquid, patrician grace and effervescent fatuity as the Grand Duchess: the character is a dotty conceit culled from Edwardian memoirs. However little its current production is burnished with charm, "The Sleeping Prince" lies limpidly secure in Mr. Rattigan's irreproachable craft.

RICHARD HAYES.

COMMUNICATIONS

"THE BURNING JEWEL"

Mentone, Cal.

TO the Editors: Having spent the summer in seclusion, working on another novel, I have only now read Mr. Getlein's review of *The Burning Jewel* [Aug. 17]. Late as it is, I hope you will still permit me to make known to him through your columns that his quaint parody of another eminent critic's manner of demolishing an example of "basic ladies' fiction" amused me as much as my book evidently irritated him.

I do not hold it against Mr. Getlein that he has no, apparent, knowledge of the British or the Romanian mentality, nor any experience of Foreign Service life—in any country or period. But he makes no such allowance for my possible misconceptions, as a recent convert to the Catholic Church, of holy religion. So I found disconcerting his implication that the successful intervention of the Holy Ghost between a soul and the forces impelling it towards damnation is "religious claptrap," and something to be held up for ridicule. Or did Mr. Getlein slip gears in mid-column?

TERESA KAY.

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On Saturday, December 15, 1956 at the Association of the Bar, 42 West 44th Street, New York City, The Guild of Catholic Lawyers of New York will sponsor the Fourth Annual Conference on the Natural Law.

MORNING SESSION—10 A.M.

Presiding Officer: Honorable Charles E. Murphy, Justice of Appellate Division, New York Supreme Court, Second Department.

SUBJECT

"The Natural Law In Its Application to the Fifth Amendment"

Speaker: Professor Edwin P. McManus, professor of Constitutional Law, Georgetown University.

AFTERNOON SESSION—2 P.M.

Presiding Officer: Honorable Joseph A. Cox, Justice of Appellate Division, New York Supreme Court, First Department.

SUBJECT

"The Natural Law In Its Application to Religious Schools Under the United States Constitution"

Speaker: Professor John Cornelius Hayes of Loyola University.

Question and answer period will follow each session.

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The Supernatural in the Historical Church

THE SPLENDOUR OF THE CHURCH. By Henri de Lubac, S.J. Sheed and Ward. $3.50.

By GEORGE H. TAVARD

THE WORKS of Father de Lubac belong to the best theological literature of our time. They deal, in various ways, with several aspects of the experience of the supernatural. Father de Lubac has traced the implicit expectation of it in his studies on modern atheism. He has devoted close attention to the inadequate yet appealing approach made by Buddhism toward the supernatural. He has written on the history of the theological definitions of it. The present book takes its place alongside some others which describe, from complementary angles, the apprehension of the supernatural in the concrete life of the Church.

Whatever the sins and shortcomings of her members, the Church is "the tent of God among men." Looking at our faults and failures, there are serious causes of sorrow or worry. Yet, "once you have got your eyes in focus you cannot miss the wonderful blossoming which goes on everywhere in her garden. And it does not matter where the causes of sorrow or worry throng in from, or how grave they are, or what their nature may be." This book is a testimony to the celestial beauty of the Church by a writer who is deeply aware of what "sorrow or worry" may nonetheless be experienced by her members. (It is unfortunate that some of that beauty has been somewhat marred by the translator, who has clearly failed to carry into English the delicacy of Father de Lubac's French.)

The "mystery of the Church," according to the author, lies in the perennity of the presence of Christ, her Bridegroom (Chapter 1). This multi-dimensional mystery justifies the oneness of Christians, the development and continuity of the Church's institution, the inchoate transformation of the world which takes place in her (Chapter 2). The two aspects, invisible and visible, of her life (Chapter 3) lead to the core of Christianity: the Mystical Body of Christ inherent in the Eucharist (Chapter 4). From this center Father de Lubac looks back on several "faces" of the Church: her relationship to the world (Chapter 5), her sacramental nature, which channels the Holy Spirit to her members, (Chapter 6), her catholicity, epitome of her mystery (Chapter 7). The book ends on two correlated chapters. There is a recurrent temptation, brought to a head in Protestantism, to despair of the Church, when, for some reason or other, her human aspect seems to absorb and hide the Divine presence. This temptation strikes at Christianity as a whole. For yielding to it would imply a refusal to walk by faith; it would be a challenge to God to alter His plans and work the salvation of the world by miraculous interventions rather than through the slow pace of the human element. Several forms of this wily temptation are examined (Chapter 8). The temptation is finally dispelled (Chapter 9) in an elevated contemplation of the fulfilment of God's purpose in a human vessel as this took place in the Virgin Mary, type, mirror and model of the Church.

This is a timely book. It is needed by those who find the Church sadly inefficient, and by those who would like her to withdraw into herself in condemnation of everything modern. One is the tendency of the "progressist" and the other is the dream of the "integralist." Catholic realism is quite other. The Church is "rooted in history." She looks back to her sources. Yet this entails no petrification: "a Christianity which deliberately takes its stand in a wholly defensive position, closed to every overture and all assimilation, is no longer Christianity," writes Father de Lubac, a most distinguished modern theologian.

The Revelation of Reticence

RAYMOND AND I. By Elizabeth Robins. Macmillan. $4.50.

By JEAN HOLZHAUER

DISTURBED by letters from her brother, an American star of the London stage set aside her professional plans in 1900 and went out alone to find him in Nome, Alaska. A quarter century later she wrote her account of this singular rescue mission and submitted the manuscript to Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press. They agreed to publish it, but were delayed by the brother's request to defer publication of the book during his lifetime. *Raymond and I,* with an explanatory foreword by Leonard Woolf, is that book.

The book is a remarkable one, indeed unique. Its author, as it amply demonstrates, was more than an accomplished actress. She was, in addition, one of those strong characters ready to undertake unusual and dangerous errands and to accomplish them with objectivity, resourcefulness and a lively interest in everything around her.

These were some of the qualities that made her a good reporter and financed her perilous journey; subsidized by London newspapers, she sent back from Nome reports of the gold rush. What she did not officially report was the personal account that went into her journal, and the journal was the basis for this book.

The personal account, of course, had chiefly to do with her brother. Eleven years her junior, Raymond Robins had been since childhood peculiarly her responsibility. He admired his sister, to an uncommon degree. Once, while both were still children, she had promised him that they would live together always, on

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a farm with cows and chickens and a pond for ducks. The promise left him with a wound from which he never recovered.

When his sister married, as she did before he was full grown, he suffered ceaselessly over the infidelity. When her husband died ten years later, he took up his old quest for the day when brother and sister, "my only love, unbroken, ever-increasing, glorious and triumphant," should be reunited. Startling as it sounds in its classic simplicity, the dream shaped and colored the whole long life of a brilliant and useful man who was later to be an ambassador to Russia.

Elizabeth reports this situation with no comment of her own estimate or of her response, beyond what would pass for ordinary sisterly devotion. What prompted her Alaskan expedition was not more nor less than concern for his health. Still under twenty-five, Raymond had jettisoned a career as a promising California lawyer to join the gold rush—to make a fortune for his sister. In Alaska he lost everything he had. His letters spoke of financial ruin, starvation and illness, and most alarmingly, at last, of "salvation"; he had fallen in with missionaries and been converted to a Christianity which bade him stay in the Klondike and work for God's poor and sick. Thoroughly alarmed, though prepared to sympathize if necessary, Elizabeth went to Nome.

.What she found there was an incredible scene of misery, gold-fever, intrigue and disease. But easily the most incredible was her brother: Raymond, at home in the midst of chaos, working tirelessly and inconsistently and rather inconclusively against squalor. To extricate him from his contradictory commitments Elizabeth saw as her duty. It is a measure of the kind of woman she was that she never forced her trump card or played on renewals of her childhood promise, although Raymond, naturally, read this solution in her pleas.

Among the assortment of historic and psychological interests that *Raymond and I* affords, two emerge conspicuously to place the book unmistakably in time. Living by a code of personal independence achieved by comparatively few women in any era, Elizabeth Robins was—in 1900, at least—free of feminist constrictions; she describes a meeting with a sympathetic stenographer as doing more to convince her of the suffragette cause than any amount of statistics, and she preserves a delightful innocence about the world of men:

" . . . he [Raymond] was carrying through those endless consultations and debates, legal arguments, municipal encounters . . . I had seen Raymond sitting among the City Fathers. One glimpse. How utterly out of this side of life we women were. What sort of thing went on in the Chamber of Commerce?"

The other point of interest is the reticence that, in her day, precluded easy confidence and set its stamp of romance, of *possibility,* on personalities and relationships in a degree unimaginable to us, fifty years later. Now, when everyone's interior life is a commonplace of conversation, a book like this can be a revelation.

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Prelude to Accomplishment

SEIZE THE DAY. By Saul Bellow. Viking. $3.

By JOHN A. LYNCH

A NOVELLA, three short stories and a one-act play are presented by Saul Bellow, a rather skimpy postscript to *The Adventures of Augie March,* the National Book Award winner for 1954, which itself was preceded by two shorter novels, *Dangling Man* and *The Victim.*

Tommy Wilhelm is the protagonist (I should like to call him hero but he is too much of an antagonist) of the novella. Tommy is forty-four, fat, vain, lewd, rude, vulgar, adulterous, a "slob" according to his enraged father, old Dr. Adler, whose name does not resemble his son's because Tommy changed his when, on the advice of one Maurice Venice, a pimp masquerading as a talent scout, he left Penn State to go to Hollywood. Tommy waited seven years on the coast for his star to rise but never got beyond an extra.

The day we meet Tommy—the story covers only one day of his life—he is living at the Gloriana Hotel on upper Broadway, is out of work, has left his wife and children, and is in the process of losing his last seven hundred dollars on the stock market, having been persuaded by a "psychologist," Dr. Tamkin, both sane and crazy, to speculate in lard. (There may be some symbolism in this but I did not investigate it.)

In flashbacks, while buying a paper, having breakfast, lighting a cigar, Wilhelm recalls the mistakes of his past, the griefs and grievances, and at one point prays: "Oh, God. Let me out of my troubles. Let me out of my thoughts, and let me do something better with myself. For all this time I have wasted I am very sorry . . . I am all balled up. Have mercy."

If Wilhelm were the victim of obstinate circumstance, of parental ill-advice, awkwardness or even ignorance, the prayer would be dramatically acceptable. But his problems have been born of and compounded by his own overwhelming pride and laziness. That he supplicates God for help is hypocritical; the author attempts to arouse compassion for an otherwise despicable and dirty character. Indeed, the copy on the dust-jacket (a plea from the publisher) says that: "Wilhelm's search to affirm his own humanity . . . moves the reader to deep pity. . . ."

Contrariwise, Wilhelm does not arouse pity—at least not until the very end. He remains a "slob." He lives with filth, pockets full of cigarette butts, room full of dirty clothes, car full of butts and Coca-Cola bottles; he is noisy and insulting; he is addicted to stimulants and depressants in turn, gulping them behind his napkin and immediately denying he does it; he is agitated by the priest who raises objections to his wanting to marry a Catholic girl once his proposed divorce goes through.

He is a failure; and, even though, at the end, it is indicated that Wilhelm is going to raise himself out of his squalor and be a man at last, the author fails, too, to arouse sufficient sympathy for him.

The story, as told, has certain recognizable literary merits. Mr. Bellow is a writer. But I believe it still remains somewhat less than meaningful.

"A Father-to-Be" is clever in a *New Yorker*-ish way, a little piece about an engaged man who, seeing on the subway someone who resembles his fiancée, sets to wondering if their children will grow up like this: fourth-rate, uninteresting, self-satisfied, dull. Dwelling on it, he makes up a case against the girl and is prepared to read her off when he meets her. Cutely, her presence, pressing against him, undoes him.

"Looking for Mr. Green" is more satisfying. George Grebe, a white man, for twenty-five dollars a week delivers relief checks in the Negro district of Chicago during the depression. The possibilities of this situation are fairly obvious, but Mr. Grebe, looking for Mr. Green, a

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crippled Negro who is more symbolic than real, has a trip worth the making, for the reader as well as himself.

In "The Gonzaga Manuscripts," a serious young man searching in Madrid for the last poems of Manuel Gonzaga, thought by him to be of great importance, is met with ridicule and bitterness by a variety of people who have no regard for Americans. The best of these meetings is with Pedro Alvarez-Polvo, who plays him with all his irony and then offers him, instead of poems, shares of stock in a Moroccan pitchblende mine for America's *"la bomba atomica."*

The one-act play, "The Wrecker," boasts a genuinely humorous situation, a husband who refuses to take a $1,000 bonus to move out of a condemned apartment house ahead of schedule in order that he may spend his last weeks, the only tenant remaining, wrecking his own apartment with crowbar, hatchet and hammer. Among other things, he wants to see the East River through the dining room. Mr. Bellow has some comments to make about the character of husband and wife but he doesn't let them get in the way of the humor.

Mr. Bellow is probably working on a fourth novel and it would be a generous move to consider the current book only as an interim report. The title story, the novella (it is Mr. Bellow's word), comprises slightly more than half the book and is reprinted from this summer's *Partisan Review*. The three stories are from the *New Yorker, Commentary* and *discovery,* the play from *New World Writing*. None of it makes a great mark; gathered together perhaps it was thought it could. I am afraid it doesn't. It bears the flurry of a fill-in job while the author is busy at something bigger.

REVIEWERS

Father George H. Tavard, A.A., is the author of the recently published *The Catholic Approach to Protestantism.*

Jean Holzhauer frequently reviews fiction for The Commonweal and other journals.

John A. Lynch, a poet and short story writer, has written for *Today*, the *Antioch Review* and other journals.

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